(b) whether a Central Team also visited Punjab to assess the loss of lives and properties; and

(c) if so, the details of the assistance provided by the Central Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Ceiling on expenditure will be approved in accordance with the established procedure on receipt of the report of the Central Team.

Unemployment Allowance

349. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is persistant demand to provide unemployment allowance to the jobless in the country;

(b) if so, whether several State Governments have also urged Central Government to examine the possibility of providing unemployment allowance to the jobless; and

(c) what is the reaction of the Union Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI BINDESHWARI DUBEY): (a) to (c) The demands for providing unemployment allowance to the jobless in the country have often been received from various quarters, including a few State Governments. The Central Government has examined this and is not in favour of payment of unemployment allowance to any category of the unemployed. Such a step has very large financial implications. The Government feels that resources of such a massive magnitude should be utilised on schemes which generate productive and enduring employment opportunities rather than be frittered away either on schemes which create unproductive work or on payment of doles to the unemployed, particularly at the present stage of development of our economy which calls for optimum utilisation of limited resources available.

Criticism of Agricultural Research in the Country

350. SHRI D.B. CHANDRE GOWDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the farm experts have sharply criticised country's agricultural research system;

(b) whether in the field of farm research any satisfactory progress has been achieved by the scientists; and

(c) if so, the details thereof; and further steps Government propose to take to boost the agricultural research in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HARI KRISHNA SHASTRI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir, Modern agriculture technology developed by the scientists has helped in increasing the agricultural productivity substantially. During the last four decades, productivity increase in foodgrains was from 6.4 to 11.8q/ha, in mustard from 4 to 7 q/ha, in cotton from 0.95 to 1.93 q/ha, (lint) in sugarcane from 342 to 599 q/ha, in potato from 66 to 126 q/ha and in tobacco from 7.7 to 10.9 q/ha. Also egg and milk production increased from 10.0 to 16.9 billions and from 31.6 to 45.9m. tonnes, respectively during the period 1980-81 to 1987-88.

(c) The foreign expertise has been sought wherever required.

For example, dwarf wheats and rices were introduced in mid-sixties from CIMMYT, Medico and IRRI, Philippines, respectively. Germplasm of potato, sunflower, soyabean, vegetables, oilpalm is being introduced. Our scientists have the opportunities to interact with forein scientists through 25 protocols signed by the Department of Agricultural Research and Education with other countries and International Organisations.

Modifications in Crop Insurance Scheme

351. SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to recent floods in several parts of country, Government propose to modify Crop Insurance Scheme;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the farmers have been badly affected due to floods; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take to give maximum benefit to the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV): (a) No. Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of answer at (a) above.

(c) The farmers in some States have been affected due to recent floods.

(d) The steps Government propose to take to give maximum benefit to the farmers include the following:—

(i) Agricultural inputs subsidy at the rate of Rs. 200/- per ha. to small and marginal farmers whose crops have been damaged more than 50 per cent.

(ii) assistance for de-silting to small and marginal farmers at the rate of 25 per cent and 33-1/3 per cent respectively on the basis of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) norms subject to a ceiling; and

(iii) conversion of short-term loans into medium term loans.

Import of wheat

352. SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to import rice and wheat from the Thailand;

(b) if so, whether the production of rice and wheat in the country is inadequate to meet its demand; and

(c) the purpose of importing rice and wheat from Thailand?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI D. L. BAITHA): (a) to (c) The Government has contracted for import of 6.5 lakh tonnes of rice from Thailand during the current year to replenish the buffer stocks which underwent considerable drawdown due to drought last year and increased pressure on the public distribution system.

Financial assistance to Kerala for loss of coconut due to pest

353. SHRI ARANGIL SREEDHARAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation from the Government of Kerala for financial assistance to compensate the revages caused to coconut trees due to pest; and